

and systematic attempt to prevent millions of elderly voters, young voters, students, minority, and low-income voters from exercising their constitutional right to engage in the democratic process. Voter ID laws are becoming all too common.

But make no mistake: Voter ID laws are a poll tax. People who struggle to pay for basic necessities cannot afford a voter ID.

The right to vote is precious and almost sacred and one of the most important blessings of our democracy. Today we must be strong in protecting that blessing. We should be making it easy, simple, and convenient for people to vote.

Before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, people stood in unmovable lines. Sometimes people were asked to count the number of bubbles in a bar of soap, the number of jelly beans in a jar. People were asked to pass a so-called literacy test. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and college professors flunked the so-called literacy test. Before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 46 years ago, many people were jailed, beaten, and some were even killed for trying to register and vote.

We must not step backward toward another dark period in our history. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have in a democratic society. We must fight back. We must speak up and speak out. We must never, ever go back.

We will not stand idly by while millions of Americans are denied their right to participate in the democratic process.

CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act.

The national debt has shattered confidence in our economy, has cost jobs, and is preventing our economic recovery. Working families across our Nation are living within their means during tough times. If the rest of America gets it, why doesn't Washington?

I recently did a Main Street-style walk-and-talk in my district where I met with a number of small business owners and their employees. They shared their concern about our out-of-control debt and frustration with Washington for enacting policies that hold down job creation and economic growth rather than fostering an environment that will enable them to thrive. But the comment I heard most often was, "What is Washington thinking?" I told them I really don't understand it either.

President Obama has spent his administration enacting policies that have added more debt to our Nation than the previous 43 Presidents combined. The tragic reality is that the President's big spending policies only

made things worse. Unemployment is at 9.2 percent, and that doesn't count the millions who have given up. The President merely fomented a cycle of debt and joblessness that defines the last 2½ years, which has placed us where we're at today.

Now, with the national debt at crisis levels, he is standing in the way of commonsense solutions; offering only lectures, not leadership. He has asked Congress to consent to continue business as usual without making serious spending reforms.

As a matter of conscience, this Congress cannot support allowing President Obama to continue to steer America's debt past the point of no return. Mr. Speaker, we will be judged harshly, and rightfully so, by future generations if we fail to act. The Cut, Cap, and Balance Act ends the era of rampant government spending. It immediately reduces spending by \$100 billion, cuts \$6 trillion over the next 10 years, and demands a strong balanced budget amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Cut, Cap, and Balance Act is what the American people want and what Washington desperately needs.

CONGRATULATING THE ELECTRIC BOAT WORKFORCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in March of 2009, the USS *Hartford*, a 17-year-old Los Angeles-class submarine, was steaming into port in the Strait of Hormuz. Visibility was low, and they were riding at ocean surface level when, out of the blue, they were struck by the USS *San Antonio*, an LPD amphibious ship. When it violently collided with the *Hartford*, the *Hartford* rolled 85 degrees, throwing sailors, anything that wasn't tied down, flying into the air.

The good news is that the collision did not result in a breach of the submarine. There was no leak through the pressure hull. But the bad news is that the sail of the submarine was badly torn 20 to 25 degrees.

The ship limped home to its home port in Groton, Connecticut, which was a tough voyage going across the Atlantic, again riding at the surface, which, as many people who know submariners know, is the worst place to ride a submarine. But it made it back to port.

And then the challenge was before the shipyard about how to repair a ship that was 17 years old, that was built with totally different technology, hand-drawn prints, a workforce that had largely retired, and parts that really weren't in existence anymore. But the folks at Electric Boat, 450 strong, came together as a team and, calling back some of their retirees, were able, over a period of 18 months, to perform the most ultimate body shop repair job of a Los Angeles-class submarine.

And I'm happy to report to this House that the USS *Hartford* is now back underway, performing its missions, and will extend the life of, again, a submarine that this country invested close to \$1 billion 20 years ago when it was first constructed. Again, the replacement costs, if this work had not been done, would be close to \$2 billion. What the folks at EB were able to do, again, at a cost of about 5 percent of that, was to get the USS *Hartford* operating and at great savings to the U.S. taxpayer.

And I want to share this story because it demonstrates that when you invest in people, nuclear welders today, as Admiral Kevin McCoy testified before the House Armed Services Committee last week, have a value to the U.S. workforce almost as great as a surgeon in terms of the skills that they have.

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When you invest in people, when you have those skills and when you have the kind of teamwork that we see at EB, this country can succeed in ways that no other country in the world can even touch us. The complexity of a nuclear submarine matches anything that a space shuttle entails in terms of the challenges to support human life in an environment where human life cannot exist. And the capabilities of one of these vessels, again, defy almost human imagination.

So congratulations to the workforce at Electric Boat for showing again that the United States of America is capable of almost taking on any challenge when it has the right combination of investment, skill and talent, something which, as we look at our challenges that we face as a Nation today, is something that we can both take inspiration from, but also learn valuable lessons about where the right priorities of this government should be. And investing in education, workforce skills again is the best investment to grow this economy and solve America's problem.

Mr. Speaker, I will include in the RECORD an article from The New London Day written by Jennifer McDermott, which again documents this amazing story of technological success.

[From TheDay.com, July 17, 2011]

ELECTRIC BOAT GETS USS HARTFORD BACK TO SEA

(By Jennifer McDermott)

REPAIRS TO DAMAGED SUB TOTAL \$120 MILLION

GROTON, CT.—Repairing a severely damaged 17-year-old submarine with the technology Electric Boat uses to build modern subs was like reconstructing a Ford Model T in a Lexus shop.

The Navy contracted with EB for about \$120 million worth of repairs to the USS *Hartford* after the Los Angeles-class submarine collided with a Navy amphibious ship in the Strait of Hormuz in 2009.

The Navy wanted the submarine back at sea as soon as possible—ideally, in one year.

The repair team at EB knew the *Hartford* (SSN 768) had rolled about 85 degrees and

damaged its sail, hull and port bow plane. But the destruction turned out to be far worse than expected.

The sail leaned 15 to 20 degrees to the starboard side. Seventy-five percent of it was torn off. It would have to be removed to patch the hull.

There would be no saving the sub if the Hartford did not keep its shape when welders cut into the hull to remove the damaged section, or after they patched it.

And the team discovered after the submarine was taken out of the water that the bow plane had caved in to the ballast tank. The masts and antennas weren't working because hydraulic fluid had shot through the system after the collision and damaged many valves.

"In my 38 years here, we have never worked on something of this magnitude, repairwise," said Stanley J. Gwudz, the director of ship's management who likened the repairs to reconstructing a Model T.

This type of repair is "about as complex as they come," said Rear Adm. David M. Duryea, deputy commander for undersea warfare.

RETIREES SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Because EB and its relatively young work force are set up for building today's Virginia-class submarines—not for major repairs to the aging Los Angeles class—some former employees came out of retirement to share their knowledge.

The trick was figuring out how to combine today's technology with yesterday's hand-drawn designs, some of which didn't match up. Daniel Vieira, the ship's manager for the repair project, laughed when asked how such a feat was accomplished.

"I lived it, and I'm not sure," Vieira said. "It was through a lot of pain. You know, you depend on a lot of people with a lot of experience and training to come back to you and say, 'This is right. This isn't. We need to fix this.'"

The biggest problem was that the sail had crushed into the pressure hull. It had been 20 years since anyone in the shipyard had performed a major cut into a submarine's hull, the pressure-tight shell of a submarine, while maintaining the circularity of the ship.

"The pressure hull is sacred ground," Vieira said. "It keeps water out. Anytime you have anything that penetrates the pressure hull, it's a big deal."

The half-moon shaped patch to fix the hull measured more than 150 square feet.

"It's very easy to get warping or misalignment or change the geometry with all the welding, which would have significant effects," Vieira said. "The ship is shaped that way for a reason."

Welders and shipfitters at EB's Quonset Point facility built a new sail using the modular construction techniques developed for the Virginia class. Years ago they would have had to fix the hull, then build the sail piece by piece on the submarine.

The repairs could have taken years if each step were done in sequence, instead of at the same time, Gwudz said.

USEFUL LESSONS LEARNED

Few vendors still make parts for Los Angeles-class submarines.

In the crash, the bow plane was forced back into its locking mechanism, caving the structure into the ballast tank. A 16-inch diameter shaft bent 4 inches, but a new shaft wasn't available. So EB engineers incorporated the 4-inch bend into the design. A new, fully functional bow plane was built around the bent shaft to dive the sub.

The damaged valves were replaced.

Testing at sea in January showed the repairs to be successful.

Gwudz could only recall one other repair job at EB where the level of damage on a submarine came close to the severity of the Hartford's. In the early 1980s, he said, a Los Angeles-class submarine needed its masts fixed and a patch underneath. The graving dock was secured for this confidential job and Gwudz said he was never told how the submarine sustained its damage.

EB can now use what it learned working on the Hartford to repair other Los Angeles-class submarines more effectively, Gwudz said. The USS Alexandria (SSN 757) is at EB for routine maintenance.

Instead of taking a ventilation valve apart to see which of the older parts are corroded, for example, Gwudz said they will know to get new flappers or linkages because these parts were corroded on the Hartford. That gives vendors more time to make the parts so they are ready when EB needs them.

Robert Hamilton, an EB spokesman, said the Hartford repair job "used 50 Connecticut suppliers with a total spend of \$3.5 million."

The project took more than one million man-hours and the efforts of 450 people at its peak.

The \$120 million price tag is less than 5 percent of what it would have cost to replace the Hartford with a new Virginia-class submarine.

"Everybody in the Navy had a lot of confidence in EB and the NAVSEA team to execute the repairs," Duryea said, referring to the Navy command responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of the Navy's ships. "Certainly we knew it would be a challenge, but EB does a very good job at executing complex work. This was just another example of the fine work they were able to do."

"We needed this capability out in the fleet," Duryea said. "Hartford has a lot of good life left in her, and we wanted to get her back to sea."

HARTFORD AT FAULT

EB originally built the Hartford at a cost of about \$900 million.

The submarine returned to the Naval Submarine Base in February, nearly two years after the March 2009 crash and 18 months after arriving at EB.

The submerged submarine and the USS New Orleans (LPD 18), a San Diego-based amphibious ship, had both been heading into port when the collision occurred.

The fuel tank ruptured on the New Orleans, creating a 16-by-18-foot hole and spilling about 25,000 gallons of diesel fuel. Two ballast tanks were damaged.

Navy investigators concluded the crew of the Hartford was at fault. The sub's leadership was called "ineffective and negligent" and sailors were accused of falling asleep on the job, spending too much time away from their stations and chatting informally while working.

Vieira could see a silver lining in the task of repairing the Hartford. He said the repairs were an opportunity for senior employees to impart their knowledge to the younger ones so these newer employees will be able to help with work on the Los Angeles class in the future.

Duryea agreed that there were technical lessons learned but, he said, "my only hope is we don't have to do these types of repairs again."

RAISING THE DEBT LIMIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the Congress is concerned about the debt. The people are concerned about the debt. The markets are concerned about the debt. The world is concerned about the debt and what we're doing here today because we live with a world fiat dollar standard, and so the whole world is engulfed in this very serious problem.

I do not understand, though, that if the debt is the problem, and I agree, the debt is the problem, that for us to come here and raise the debt by \$2.4 trillion is the solution. That just baffles me. I think it's a distraction, because when a country gets indebted to the degree that we're indebted, the country always defaults. This is historic, especially if the country is a significant country. On occasion a small country will quit sending the checks and they'll go bankrupt. We're not going to do that, but we will default because the debt is unsustainable.

This year it is said that we have a debt increase of \$1.6 trillion, but that's not true. If you count what we borrow from the pension funds, the Social Security and highway funds, it's \$2 trillion. But if you include the increase in the entitlement obligation, it's \$5 trillion. So this is a huge, huge problem.

But the argument here is how do you default. And it is said that if we don't raise the debt limit, we're going to default and not send out the checks. I don't believe that for a minute. Somehow or another the checks are going to go out.

But if you really wanted to live within the technicalities of law, there's a very simple thing you could do. We owe the Federal Reserve \$1.6 trillion. Well, that's not a real debt. They bought those Treasury bills with money out of thin air. We could just write that off or quit paying the interest, tide ourselves over and get down to serious business and cut back and live within our means, and that would be a solution.

But to increase the national debt will only encourage another type of default, and that's what we're going through. We're engaged in the most difficult and a very bad way of defaulting, and that is through the destruction of the currency.

Today we have an inflation rate of 9 percent, and that is defaulting. So if a government can default and print money, and if they can get a 50 percent inflation rate over a period of time, they've cut that debt in half. That is the goal; that is what's happening. And that is very, very serious.

Just in these last 3 years in dealing with this crisis, the dollar has been devalued 50 percent against gold. And gold, of course, is the best measurement of the value of a currency. It's been that way for thousands of years, and it cannot be denied because it's economic law. So we are defaulting.

And when the American people go out and start buying goods and services, like they are now, they are recognizing they cost a lot of money. So right now we are in the early stages of